

Name of Committee: Town-School Partnership Committee

Meeting Date: April 26, 2013

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Location: Town Hall, Selectmen's Conference Room

Members Present:

Attendees indicated by x

Betsy DeWitt, Board of Selectmen Chair	x	Mel Kleckner, Town Administrator	x
Nancy Daly, Board of Selectmen	x	Bill Lupini, School Superintendent	x
Alan Morse, School Committee Chair	x	Harry Bohrs, Advisory Committee, Chair	x
Amy Kershaw, School Committee	x	Len Weiss, Advisory Committee	x

Staff Present: Peter Rowe, Deputy School Superintendent; Sean Cronin, Deputy Town Administrator; Melissa Goff, Assistant Town Administrator; Stephen Cirillo, Finance Director; Michael D'Onofrio, Director of Administrative Services (School Dept.)

Topic: Approval of minutes of 2-1-13

Unanimously approved.

Topic: FY14 Budget Update

Town Administrator Mel Kleckner explained that there are impacts on the FY14 budget because of (1) the version of the State budget approved by the House of Representatives and (2) efforts to provide the School budget with additional funding in order to avoid eliminating programs. He asked Deputy Town Administrator Sean Cronin to review the House budget and asked Superintendent Bill Lupini to explain the steps taken to ensure the continuation of the school programs originally slated for elimination. Before they did, TA Kleckner noted that he fully supports the changes recommended to augment the School budget and feels comfortable in waiting to see what the final outcome of the State budget is before any changes are made to the Town's budget.

Deputy TA Sean Cronin reviewed with the Committee the following memo regarding the House budget:

OFFICE OF SELECTMEN  
MEMORANDUM

TO: Melvin A. Kleckner, Town Administrator

FROM: Sean Cronin, Deputy Town Administrator

RE: **Final FY14 House Budget**

DATE: April 25, 2013

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Last night the House completed its debate on the House Ways and Means Committee's (HWM) FY14 budget and ended up approving \$135M of amendments, including \$27M for Local Aid. A number of amendments that were approved positively impacted Brookline:

- **Ch. 70** was increased by \$5.3M statewide above the HWM figure, resulting in \$225K for Brookline above the HWM figure. However, the \$10.3M for Brookline is still \$367K less than the amount we assumed in the FY14 budget.
- **Circuit Breaker** was increased by \$3M statewide above the HWM figure. The \$238.5M statewide appropriation reflects an increase of \$8.5M above both the FY13 Post-9C Cut budget and the Governor's FY14 budget. The School budget assumed level-funding, so the final House number results in approx. \$70K of additional funding for the Schools.
- **METCO** was increased by \$1.5M statewide above the HWM figure. The \$18.6M statewide appropriation reflects an increase of \$500K above both the FY13 Post-9C Cut budget and the Governor's FY14 budget. The School budget assumed level-funding, so the final House number results in approx. \$35K of additional funding for the Schools.

The attached spreadsheet shows how the House budget, while an improvement over the HWM budget<sup>1</sup>, results in a Local Aid allocation that is \$225K<sup>2</sup> less than what was assumed in the Town's FY14 budget. At this time, I continue to recommend that we refrain from making any changes to the budget going to Town Meeting. I suggest that we wait to see what the Senate Ways and Means (SWM) budget contains for Local Aid.

In your April 22 memo to the Selectmen regarding the budget vote under Article 8, you stated that you were committed to developing a plan that protects the Schools from any State Aid reduction below what was in the Financial Plan. Based on the House budget, that commitment is worth \$225K. As previously noted, I recommend that we wait until the SWM budget is released before we make any adjustments. If ultimately necessary, adjustments to the budget can be made at the Fall Town Meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> The HWM budget resulted in a Local Aid package for Brookline that was \$450K below what was assumed in the FY14 budget.

<sup>2</sup> The HWM budget's Ch. 70 figure was \$593K below the figure assumed in the FY14 budget. In addition, the Charter School Reimbursement was \$10K below. Partially offsetting that was a \$127K increase in General Government Aid. When added to a favorable swing in Assessments of \$26K, the impact on the FY14 budget was \$450K [(\$593K + \$10K) - (\$127K + \$26K)].

Superintendent Lupini commented on the collaboration between the Town and School administrations and is very pleased with the outcome of the discussion that had been on-going about how to help the School budget avoid significant programmatic reductions. He explained the steps taken to provide the School budget with additional budget capacity:

Possible Restorations

- Enrichment and Challenge Support Program (\$264K)
- General Music (\$264K)
- High School Staffing (1 FTE) (\$57K)
- Elementary Math Specialist (1 FTE) (\$57K)

**Total Possible Restorations (\$642k)**

Less: School Department Adjustments

- Middle Level General Music not restored (.9 FTE) (\$51K)
- Elementary Specialists not implemented due to "reduction" in kindergarten sections (1 FTE) (\$57K)
- Remove HS Summer School Contingency (\$30K)
- Fully Fund Health Insurance for Food Services from Revolving Account (\$50K)
- Reduce increase to Teaching and Learning - Supplies and Materials (\$10K)

**Remaining Balance (\$444k)**

**Less: Additional Reserves to be used in operating budget (\$300K)**

**Remaining Balance - to be funded by the Town (\$144K)**

Superintendent Lupini noted that the additional \$300K from reserves is only available as a result of the success of the School Department's FY13 budget freeze. He also explained that committing these funds means that the Schools will have a total of \$650K from reserves as part of the FY14 spending plan.

Deputy TA answered Committee questions regarding where the \$144K will come from in the Town Budget by stating that the following reductions will be made:

- Building Dept. Vehicle (\$25,000) -- defer the replacement of one vehicle for one year
- Health Dept. Vehicle (\$25,000) -- defer the replacement of the Sealer of Weights & Measurer's vehicle for one year
- Police cruiser (\$35,000) -- reduce the annual replacement from 11 to 10
- Fire Dept. SCBA Equipment (\$59,000) -- expected to be funded via a grant

Selectwoman Nancy Daly asked Superintendent Lupini about cuts to Title I. He answered that they are assuming a 6% cut to the program.

School Committee member Amy Kershaw reflected on the process that has resulted in a plan to avoid making cuts to programs. She feels as though the School Committee has gone through a fire drill for about three months and now, at the last minute, programs are being saved. She wondered how this process could be avoided in the future. In response, Board of Selectmen Chairwoman Betsy DeWitt noted that there was more uncertainty

this year than in other budget cycles. In addition, the tight budgets of the past few years brought on by the economic climate have resulted in less flexibility. Town Administrator Kleckner added that he didn't feel great about the last minute approach, but there had to be a resolution now so that the larger issues facing the Town in FY15 can begin to be addressed.

Advisory Committee Chair Harry Bohrs spoke about the challenges going forward. In addition to enrollment pressures, there is a structural budget deficit in the Schools and current growth is not sustainable for the long term. He explained that an Override will most likely be needed for FY15. He recommends bringing on an arm's length arbiter to help review the School budget and help plan for the future. He believes that the Schools are on the cusp of a sea change, so there are going to be difficult conversations going forward. School Committee member Kershaw agreed that outside review is necessary because of the need to go to the voters for additional taxes. It could also result in learning some things that would prove helpful to the overall educational programming of the schools. Board of Selectmen Chairwoman DeWitt questioned the ability to undertake such a review in the timeframe facing the Town.

Advisory Committee member Len Weiss added his observations that the process was "ugly", but in a certain sense no different than what has happened over the past few years with the Schools putting out a number of fires. He feels as though the School budget has been approached in a way similar to trying to fit a big foot into a small shoe. He believes the shoe size needs to be expanded. He also noted how he believes we're already behind and have less than a year to develop a plan and sell it to the voters. He wants to see a quantifiable analysis to determine what the needs of the Schools are.

Superintendent Lupini expressed his concern that ideas are being floated now by various groups around town and the impact on future students is not necessarily being considered. As an example, he said the so-called "small ball" approach toward the facility component of the overcrowding issue, which is being promoted by some parents, is good for current students, but does nothing to address common spaces. That plan also fails if there are more than 600 kindergarten students in future classes.

Topic: Update on the Brookline School Population and Capacity Exploration (B-SPACE) Committee

School Committee Chair Alan Morse provided the Committee with an update of the work to-date of the B-SPACE Committee. He and Board of Selectmen Chairwoman DeWitt are recommending to B-SPACE that they break into sub-committees. They believe this approach will expedite the analyses required to make recommendations within the time frame originally laid out. July 9<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for B-SPACE recommendations to the School Committee. He also noted that the four models currently being studied are the "small ball" approach, a new K-8 school, a 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> grade school, and BHS renovations/additions.

Deputy TA Cronin explained how the work of the B-SPACE is directly linked with the discussions for an Operating Override. He reviewed with the Committee the points he made during a recent presentation to the B-SPACE Committee about how the timing of

overrides (Operating and Debt Exclusion) points to a May, 2014 vote for two separate overrides: one for operating and one for a capital project (Devotion). He went on to explain a concept being explored internally that would link both overrides together for the voters. In summary, the concept is to determine the multi-year costs associated with the overcrowding issue and have any Operating Override include those amounts so that taxpayers will see that the Town has developed a long-term spending plan for this issue. In addition to those amounts, the Operating Override would include funding to close the structural gap in the School budget, address the underfunding of technology in the schools, and fund the leasing of temple space that is necessary to help address the enrollment growth. While this could be a substantial sum of money in the aggregate, it would show the voters a multi-year plan has been developed in order to avoid additional overrides over the next few years.

Advisory Committee member Len Weiss commented that work on any concept like this must start now, as ultimately it will come down to explaining to the public why this is necessary.

Topic: Devotion School Project

TA Kleckner informed the Committee that the MSBA approved the Town's application to have Tony Guigli be the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) for the project. He also noted that the MSBA wants an update on B-SPACE's work. This is slated for May 1 at the MSBA.

The Committee adjourned at 11:10 p.m.